

Gheg Albanian

Gheg Albanian (also spelled **Geg Albanian**; Gheg Albanian: *gegnisht*, Standard Albanian: *gegë* or *gegërisht*) is one of the two major varieties of Albanian. The other is Tosk on which Standard Albanian is based. The geographic dividing line between the two varieties is the Shkumbin River, which winds its way through central Albania.^{[8][9]} Gheg is spoken in Northern Albania, Kosovo, northwestern North Macedonia, southeastern Montenegro and southern Serbia, by the Albanian dialectal subgroup known as Ghegs.^[9]

Gheg does not have any official status as a written language in any country. Publications in Kosovo and North Macedonia are in Standard Albanian, which is based on Tosk. However, some authors continue to write in Gheg.

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History

Before World War II, there had been no official attempt to enforce a unified Albanian literary language; both literary Gheg and literary Tosk were used.^[9] The communist regime in Albania imposed nationwide a standard that was based on the variant of Tosk spoken in and around the city

Gheg Albanian	
	<i>gegnisht</i>
Region	Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia
Native speakers	3.45 million to 3.47 ^{[1][2][3][4]} (2000 ^[5] – 2001 censuses) ^[6]
Language family	<div>Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albanian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gheg Albanian</div>
Dialects	Istrian Albanian <div>Arbanasi</div> <div>Northeastern Gheg</div> <div>Northwestern Gheg</div> <div>Upper Reka</div> <div>Northern Gheg</div> <div>Southern Gheg</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	aln
Glottolog	gheg1238 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/gheg1238) ^[7]
Linguasphere	55-AAA-aa
<div><div>A map showing Gheg speakers in green</div></div>	

of Korçë.^[9]

With the warming of relations between Albania and Yugoslavia starting in the late 1960s, the Kosovo Albanians—the largest ethnic group in Kosovo—adopted the same standard^[10] in a process that began in 1968 and culminated with the appearance of the first unified Albanian orthographic handbook and dictionary in 1972.^[9] Although they had until then used Gheg and almost all Albanian writers in Yugoslavia were Ghegs, they chose to write in Tosk for political reasons.^[11]

The change of literary language has had significant political and cultural consequences because the Albanian language is the main criterion for Albanian self identity.^[12] The standardization has been criticized, notably by the writer Arshi Pipa, who claimed that the move had deprived Albanian of its richness at the expense of the Ghegs.^[13] He referred to literary Albanian as a "monstrosity" produced by the Tosk communist leadership, who had conquered anti-communist northern Albania and imposed own dialect on the Ghegs.^[14]

Kosovan language

In post-WWII Yugoslavia there was a project to create a Kosovan language, which would have been largely Gheg. This was in line with Josip Broz Tito's reorganization of the country into a federation of ethnolinguistically defined nations, which relied heavily on language policy to create or reinforce separation of these nations from such neighbors as Bulgaria, and it built on efforts by communist Albania to unite with Yugoslavia. The idea of union was dropped though, in the aftermath of the split between Stalin and Tito in 1948, as Albania sided with Moscow. As a result of this rupture and other factors, no such Kosovan language was ever created. Indeed, in 1974 the Tosk-based standard Albanian was adopted as an official language of Kosovo.^[15]

Dialects

The Gheg dialect is divided by four sub-dialects: Central Gheg, Southern Gheg, Northwestern Gheg (or Western Gheg), and Northeastern Gheg (or Eastern Gheg).

Southern Gheg

Southern Gheg is spoken in Albania (Durrës, Elbasan, Tiranë) and western North Macedonia.^[16]

A subdialect is **Central Gheg**, spoken in Tiranë (sometimes included), Krujë, Burrel.^[16] The transnational Dibra region speaks Central Gheg dialects as well, and there is one particularly divergent dialect in Upper Reka, the Upper Reka Albanian dialect.^[17] Additional included regions include Lura, Tetova, Gostivari, Skopje and Kumanova^[18]

The dialect of parts of Mirdita is also sometimes classified as a subdialect of Southern Gheg.^[19]

Southern Gheg proper is said to include the prominent dialects of Durres, Elbasan and Tirana.^[19]

Northern Gheg

- Northeastern Gheg (Krasniqe, Nikaj-Mertur, Has, Gashi, Tropoja, Kaçanik, Dragaš, Gjilan, Preševo, Bujanovac, Prishtina, Vushtri, Mitrovica, Podujevo, Medveđa and the formerly Albanian-populated territories of Niš Sanjak (Niš, Vranje, Toplica District).^[20]
- Northwestern Gheg (Shkodër, Shiroka, Vermosh, Selcë, Vukël, Lëpushë, Nikç, Tamarë, Tuzi, Shestani-Kraja, Ulcinj, Bar, Plav, Gusinje, Pejë, Gjakovë, Prizren, Lezhe and the rest of

Malësia)^[20]

- One isolated and particularly divergent Northwestern^[21] dialect: the Arbanasi dialect of diaspora Albanians in Croatia^[22]

The Italian linguist Carlo Tagliavini puts the Gheg of Kosovo and North Macedonia in Eastern Gheg.^[23]

Northeastern Gheg

Northeastern Gheg, sometimes known as **Eastern Gheg**, is a variant or sub-dialect of Gheg Albanian spoken in Northeastern Albania, Kosovo, and Serbia.

The Northeastern Gheg dialectal area begins roughly down from the eastern Montenegrin-Albanian border, including the Albanian districts (Second-level administrative country subdivisions) of Tropojë, Pukë, Has, Mirditë and Kukës; the whole of Kosovo^[a], and the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo in Serbia. The tribes in Albania speaking the dialect include Nikaj-Merturi, Puka, Gashi, and Tropoja.

The Albanian speech in roughly around Tetovo and Skopska Crna Gora, in North Macedonia, is sometimes regarded part of Northeastern Gheg.

Calques of Serbian origin are evident in the areas of syntax and morphology.^[24] The Northeastern Gheg slightly differs from Northwestern Gheg (spoken in Shkodër),^[9] as the pronunciation is deeper and more prolonged. Northeastern Gheg is considered to be the autonomous branch of Gheg Albanian^[25] in turn, the Northeastern Gheg dialects themselves differ greatly among themselves.^[26]

The dialect is also split in a few other minority dialects, where the phoneme [y] of standard Albanian is pronounced as [i], i.e. "ylberi" to "ilberi" (both meaning rainbow); "dy" to "di" (both meaning two). In Northeastern Gheg, the palatal stops of standard Albanian, such as [ç] (as in *qen*, "dog") and [ʃ] (as in *gjumë*, "sleep"), are realised as palato-alveolar affricates, [t͡ʃ] and [d͡ʒ] respectively.^[27]

Northwestern Gheg

Northwestern Gheg, sometimes known as **Western Gheg**, is a sub-dialect of Gheg Albanian spoken in Northwestern Albania, Southern Montenegro, and Western Kosovo. The inhabitants of the renowned region of Malësia are Northwestern Gheg speakers. The tribes that speak this dialect are the Malësor, Dukagjin and other highlander tribes which include (Malësia): Hoti, Gruda, Triepshi, Kelmendi, Kastrati, Shkreli, Lohja, etc., (Dukagjin) : Shala, Shoshi, Shllaku, Dushmani, etc., etc..(Mirdita, Lezhë),...*(see Tribes of Albania)*.

The main contrast between Northwestern Gheg and Northeastern Gheg is the slight difference in the tone and or pronunciation of the respective dialects. Northwestern Gheg does not have the more deeper sounding a's, e's, etc. and is considered by some to sound slightly more soft and clear in tone compared to Northeastern Gheg, yet still spoken with a rough Gheg undertone compared to the Southern Albanian dialects. Other differences include different vocabulary, and the use of words like "*kon*" (been), and "*qysh*" (how?) which are used in Northeastern Gheg, and not often used in Northwestern Gheg. Instead Northwestern Gheg speakers say "*kjen or ken*" (been), and use the adverb "*si*" to say (how?). For example in Northeastern Gheg to say "when I was young", you would say, "*kur jam kon i ri*", while in Northwestern Gheg you would say "*kur kam ken i ri, kur jam ken i ri*".

Although there is a degree of variance, Northwestern Gheg and Northeastern Gheg are still very much similar, and speakers of both sub-dialects have no problem understanding and having a conversation with one another.

Differentiations between the Northwestern Gheg dialects themselves are minuscule, unlike the Northeastern Gheg dialects where there is more differentiation.

Phonology

Assimilations are common in Gheg but are not part of the Albanian literary language, which is a standardized form of Tosk Albanian.^[28]

Vowels

Oral

IPA	Written as
[ə]	ë (nër: 'under')
[a]	a (mas: 'after')
[ɑ]	â (prâpë: 'back')
[ɒ]	ă (knăqët: 'having fun')
[e]	e (dere: 'door')
[ɛ]	ê (mênôj: 'I think')
[i]	i (dritë: 'light')
[o]	o (kos: 'yoghurt')
[u]	u (kur: 'when')
[y]	y (ylli: 'star')
[ɔ]	ô (dôrë: 'hand')

Nasalized

IPA	Written as ^[29]
[ɪ̃]	ĩ (hĩna: 'I entered')
[ɛ̃]	ẽ (mrěna: 'within')
[ɑ̃]	ã (hãna: 'moon')
[õ̃]	õ (fõ: 'satiated', some dialects)
[ỹ̃]	ỹ (gjỹs: 'half')
[ũ̃]	ũ (hũna: 'nose')

Examples

Standard	Tosk	Cham	<u>Arbëresh</u>	South Gheg	Central Gheg	Northeastern Gheg	Northwestern Gheg	English
Shqipëri		Shkqipëri		Shqipri	Shqipni	Shqypni/Shipni	Shipni	"Albania"
Një				Nji, njo	Ni	Ni, njo/nja	Nja, nji	"One"
Bëj			Bunj	Bôj		Bâj, boj	Bâj	"I do"
Qenë	Qënë	Klënë		Qên	Kên	Kôn, kân	Kjen	"Been"
Pleqëri	Pleqri	Plekjëri		Pleqni		Pleçni		"Old age"
Është	Është <i>or</i> Ësht'	Është	Isht <i>or</i> ë	Ôsht <i>or</i> ô		Osht <i>or</i> o/Âsht <i>or</i> â	Âsht <i>or</i> â	"Is"
Nëntë				Nônt	Nôn	Non, Nond/Nân	Nând	"Nine"
Shtëpi			Shpi	Shpí	Shp(e)j	Shp(a)j/Shpi, Shpí	Shp(e)i	"Home"

See also

- Albanian dialects
- Arbëresh language
- Arvanitika
- Cham Albanian dialect

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External links

- [Albanian Etymology](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Category:sq:Etymology) (<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Category:sq:Etymology>)
 - [ISO Documentation](http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=aln) (<http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=aln>)
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